



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: May 28, 2020

Agenda Item: 2020/2021 Helena Urban Deer Plan Quota Ranges, Quota and EA extension

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background: In 2003, the Montana Legislature authorized cities to create plans to control wildlife to address public health and safety within city limits. Such plans must be approved by the Fish and Wildlife Commission. The city of Helena subsequently developed an Urban Deer Management Plan seeking to remove deer to achieve an objective of ≤ 25 deer per square mile. FWP completed a third programmatic environmental assessment in 2009 that confirmed objectives and methods for urban deer management in Helena. This current proposal is to establish the quota range for the 2020-2021 biennium and would cover deer removals during the Nov. 15, 2020 – March 31, 2021 and Nov. 15, 2021 – March 31, 2022 time periods. If the number of deer prescribed to be taken in any one year is within the quota range, no commission action is required. This current action is only to adopt the quota range within which to operate. FWP is proposing no change to the existing quota range of 0-250. Any quotas do not apply to individual deer removed under urgent public-safety situations.

The city of Helena has not sought approval to remove deer during winter 2019-20 due to city budget constraints (no funding allocated for urban wildlife in 2019). The city also did not conduct a survey in fall of 2019. Therefore, the quota for winter 2019-20 is 0. In future years, a survey will remain a requirement for seeking approval to remove deer.

FWP also proposes to extend adoption of the programmatic EA *City of Helena Urban Deer Management Plan* indefinitely, unless or until the city of Helena changes its management approach to urban deer or other circumstances arise that would necessitate a change to urban deer management in Helena. The programmatic EA sunsets on Dec. 31, 2019.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The city of Helena conducted extensive public involvement in developing its plan and the previous urban deer EAs. FWP provided separate 30-day public comment periods. Public support was split throughout these earlier processes. In addition to public comment at the Jan. 6 commission meeting, public comment ran through 5 p.m. Feb. 3, 2020. Three comments were received and forwarded to the commission.

Alternatives and Analysis: The proposal may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, or with deletions as per staff justifications, public comment, and/or commission discussion.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt as final, the 2020 - 2021 quota range for take of urban deer by the city of Helena and the indefinite extension of the *City of Helena Urban Deer Management Plan* as presented by FWP.